

From biographies of scientific objects to global narratives in Swiss museums

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Mark Dion · *Mobile Wilderness Unit - Wolf*, 2006, diverse Materialien, Georg Kargl Fine Arts Vienna, Kunstmuseum St.Gallen. Foto: Sebastian Stadler.

Wednesday 15-17 hrs.

IFW A 34

Abstract

This seminar will reflect on contemporary trends in the history of knowledge and its study of material culture. The focus will be placed on scientific objects and their “biographies” as a means for constructing the history of science. It involves the understanding of knowledge networks on a global scale and the establishment of museums and collections as “cathedrals of science.” This seminar on biographies of scientific objects and global narratives aims to research critically epistemic and (post-)colonial entanglements and the centre-periphery dynamics in the history of knowledge from other perspectives, like the materiality turn, animal studies and questions of human-non-human agencies. Methodologically, the course proposes to do fieldwork in Swiss museums, collections and storage facilities where this issue can be examined today.

Requirements


- Regular attendance and active participation (minimum:80%recommended)
- Regular reading of mandatory texts and fulfillment of 2-3 assignments during semester
- Submit a term paper at the end of semester

Teaching Materials: <https://moodle-app2.let.ethz.ch/course/view.php?id=11605>

Technical Support: rahel.gutmamm@gmw.gess.ethz.ch



Storage in Historisches Museum. Foto: Tomás Bartoletti

18 Sept	Welcome, Introduction, Organization
25 Sept 	Ethnographing Eurocentrism: Visit to Rietberg Museum “The Question of Provenance. Unwrapping Collection History” Have a look: https://rietberg.ch/en/exhibitions/questionofprovenance#/ Watch this film (‘30): Les statues meurent aussi (Statues Also Die) , directed by Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, and Ghislain Cloquet. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzFeuiZKHcg
2 Oct	Theories & Concepts I: Possessing Nature From Cabinets of Curiosities to Cathedrals of Science (?) Sheets-Pyenson, Susan. 1988. <i>Cathedrals of Science. The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums during the Late Nineteenth Century</i> . Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Pp. 3-23; 69-91. <u>Further readings</u> Alberti, Samuel. 2018. “Museum nature”, in <i>Worlds of Natural History</i> , ed. Helen Curry, Cambridge University Press: 348-362. Findlen, Paula. 1994. <i>Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press. Browne, Janet (1992). "A science of empire: British biogeography before Darwin". <i>Revue d'histoire des sciences</i> . 45 (4): 453–475. Jardine, Nicholas et al. (eds.). 1997. <i>Cultures of Natural History</i> . Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. MacGregor, A., <i>Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century</i> (New Haven, 2007). Bleichmar, D. 2011. “Seeing the world in a room: looking at exotica in early modern collections”, in D. Bleichmar and P. C. Mancall (eds.), <i>Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern World</i> . Philadelphia: 15–30.
9 Oct	Theories & Concepts II: Biographies of Objects and Scientific Boundaries Local and global, particular and universal (?) Daston, Lorraine (ed.) 2000. “Introduction: The Coming into Being of Scientific Objects”, in L. Daston (ed.) <i>Biographies of Scientific Objects</i> . Chicago University Press.

Further readings

- Star, Susan; Griesemer, James (1989). "Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39". *Social Studies of Science*. 19 (3): 387–420.
- Latour, B. 1987. *Science in Action: How to follow Scientist and Engineers through Society*. Cambridge.
- Fischer-Tiné, H. 2013. *Pidgin-Knowledge: Wissen und Kolonialismus*. Zürich Berlin.
- Secord, James A. 2004. "Knowledge in Transit". *Isis* 95 (4): 654-72.
- Foucault, Michel. (1969) 2002. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London and New York: Routledge.

16 Oct **Ethnographing the Breathless Zoo:**

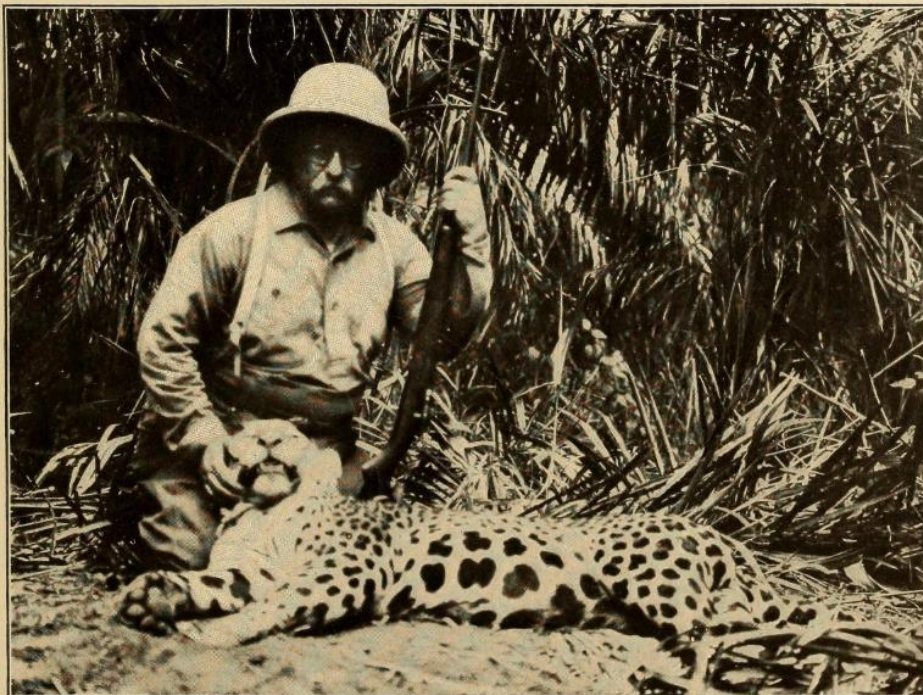
Visit to **Zoological Museum, UZH**: <https://www.zm.uzh.ch/en.html>



Wonders, Karen. 1993. *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History*. Uppsala.

Further readings

- Farber, P. L. 1977. "The development of taxidermy and the history of ornithology", *Isis*, 68: 550–66.
- te Heesen, Anke. 2000. "Boxes in nature", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 31: 381–403.
- te Heesen, Anke; Emma Spary (eds.). 2001. *Sammeln als Wissen. Das Sammeln und seine wissenschaftshistorische Bedeutung*, Berlin.
- Häner, F. 2017. *Dinge sammeln, Wissen schaffen, Die Geschichte der naturhistorischen Sammlungen in Basel, 1735-1850*. Bielefeld.
- Pomian, Krzysztof 1988. *Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln*. Berlin.



Colonel Roosevelt and the first jaguar

From a photograph by Kermit Roosevelt

23 Oct **White Hunter-collectors: the Empire of Nature**

Kohler, R. 2006. *All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors and Biodiversity, 1850–1950*. Princeton.

Further readings

Coote, Anne; Haynes, Alison ; Philp, Jude; Ville, Simon. "When commerce, science, and leisure collaborated: the nineteenth-century global trade boom in natural history collections". *Journal of Global History* 12 (3): 319-339.

MacKenzie, John (1988) *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, New York.

Habermas, R. and Przyrembel, A. (eds.). 2013. *Von Käfern, Märkten und Menschen. Kolonialismus und Wissen in der Moderne*. Göttingen.

D. A. Finnegan and J. J. Wright (eds.). 2015. *Spaces of Global Knowledge: Exhibition, Encounter and Exchange in an Age of Empire*. London.

Kupper, P.; Schär, B. (eds.) 2015. *Die Naturforschenden. Auf der Suche nach Wissen über die Schweiz und die Welt, 1800-2015*. Baden.

Schär, B. 2015. *Tropenliebe: Schweizer Naturforscher und niederländischer Imperialismus in Südostasien um 1900*, Frankfurt am Main.

Harries, P. 2007. *Butterflies and Barbarians: Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in Southeast Africa*. Oxford: 123-154.

Zangger, A. 2011. *Koloniale Schweiz. Ein Stück Globalgeschichte zwischen Europa und Südostasien (1860-1930)*. Bielefeld: 348-399.

30 Oct **Sciences of Man and Dark Trophies**

Redman, Samuel J. 2016. *Bone Rooms: From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums*. Harvard University Press.

Further readings

Brace, Loring. "Race" is a four letter word. *The Genesis of the Concept*. Oxford University Press.

Harrison, Simon. 2012. *Dark Trophies: Hunting and the Enemy Body in Modern War*. New York.

Reubi, S. 2011. *Gentlemen, prolétaires et primitifs: Institutionnalisation, pratiques de collection et choix muséographiques dans l'ethnographie suisse, 1880–1950*. Bern.

Sera-Shriar, E. 2013. *The making of British anthropology, 1813-1871*. London. Pickering & Chatto.

Schär, Bernhard C. 2019. "From Batticaloa via Basel to Berlin. Transimperial Science in Ceylon and Beyond around 1900", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*.

Tucker, W.H. (1994). *The Science and Politics of Racial Research*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Wallis, Brian. 1995. "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes". *American Art* 9 (2): 38-61.

6 Nov **Politics of Display**

MacDonalds, Sharon (ed.). 1997. *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*. London.

Further readings

Thorsen, Liv; Rader, Karen; Dodd Adam (eds.). 2013. *Animals on Display. The Creaturely in Museums, Zoos, and Natural History*. Peen State University Press.

Wonders, Karen. 2003. "Habitat Dioramas and the Issue of Nativeness," *Landscape Research* 28 (1): 89-100.

Karp, Ivan, and Steven Lavine (eds.). 1991. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

te Heesen, Anke; Vöhringer, Margarete. 2014. *Wissenschaft im Museum – Ausstellung im Labor*. Kulturverlag Kadmos, Berlin.

13 Nov **Ethnographing (Pre)Humans:**



Visit to **Museum of Anthropology, UZH:**

<https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/en/outreach/museums/anthropologisches-museum.html>

Assignment to be announced



Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins, American Museum of Natural History

20 Nov **Laboratories of Governmentality**

Bennett, Tony; Cameron, Fiona; Dias, Nelia. 2017. *Collecting, Ordering, Governing: Anthropology, Museums, and Liberal Government*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Further readings

- Thomas, Nicholas. 1994. *Colonialism's culture: anthropology, travel, and government*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Thomas, Nicholas. 1991. *Entangled objects: exchange, material culture and colonialism in the Pacific*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Pels, Peter. 1997. "The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26:163–83.
- Pels, Peter, and Oscar Salemink. 1999. "Introduction: Locating the Colonial Subjects of Anthropology." In *Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology*, edited by Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, 1–52. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. Vol. 5. Translated by Graham Burchell. Edited by Michel Sennelart. General Editors: François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana. English Series Editor: Arnold I. Davidson. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- Miller, Peter, and Nikolas Rose. 1989. "Political Rationalities and Technologies of Government." In *Texts, Concepts, Contexts*, edited by Sakari Hanninen and Kari Palonen, 167–83. Helsinki: Finnish Political Science Association.

27 Nov **The Question of Provenance and Repatriation, revisited**

Sarr, Felwine and Savoy, Bénédicte. 2018. *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*. Paris.

Further readings

- Thomas, Nicholas. 2015. "A Critique of the Natural Artefact: Anthropology, Art & Museology." *Art History Lecture Series* 13: 6-49.
- Thomas, Nicholas (ed.). 2016. *Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting and Museum Histories*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Fforde, Cressida; Turnbull, Paul; Hubert, Jane. 2002. *The Dead and their Possessions: Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice*. London.
- Kuprecht, Karolina. 2013. *Indigenous peoples' cultural property claims: repatriation and beyond*. Berlin.

4 Dec **Museums of tomorrow: dialogue of experts, knowledge exchange, indigenous epistemologies, ontological turn, intangible heritage, cultural properties, etc, etc, etc...**

Have a look to Völkerkundemuseum UZH: <https://www.musethno.uzh.ch/en.html>

Exhibition *Trinkkultur – Kultgetränk*:

<https://www.musethno.uzh.ch/de/ausstellungen/archiv/trinkkultur.html>

Assignment to be announced

11 Dec **Ethnographying Helvetians:**



Visit to *Landesmuseum Zürich*: <https://www.nationalmuseum.ch/e/zuerich/>

Zimmer, O. 2007. *A Contested Nation: History, Memory and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761-1891*. Cambridge.

Assignment to be announced

18 Dec

Final Discussion & Evaluation



“Berner” Ekeko’s illa in Bolivia. Foto: Rainer Hoffmann & Erika Harzer.